

17 How to: preparing to find a job as a Spanish teacher in the UK

Gemma Carmen Belmonte Talero¹

1. Introduction

This case study is about the design of the one-day course ‘How to find a job as a Spanish teacher in the UK’, which is taught at the Instituto Cervantes in London. The course came to exist due to a large number of requests from Spaniards who have come to the UK in recent years – many of them wanting to find a job as a Spanish teacher – and realising that they lacked the knowledge as to how to go about it. Most of the course participants have been Spanish graduates from different fields of study but there have also been an increasing number of participants from Latin America.

Course participants often point out that when it comes to retraining or acquiring a new job specialisation, the information found on the internet can appear overwhelming and for them – mostly newcomers to the teaching profession – having a friendly face who can guide them through the vast amounts of information available is very useful. Likewise, the course facilitator offers a key support as participants experience the challenges, joys and frustrations of the job search. Many need support to boost their confidence.

Keywords: Spanish, teacher, skills, job market.

1. Instituto Cervantes, London, United Kingdom; gemma.belmonte@cervantes.es

How to cite this chapter: Belmonte Talero, G. C. (2016). How to: preparing to find a job as a Spanish teacher in the UK. In E. Corradini, K. Borthwick and A. Gallagher-Brett (Eds), *Employability for languages: a handbook* (pp. 117-120). Dublin: Research-publishing.net. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14705/rpnet.2016.cbg2016.472>

2. What we did

After being given the required permission to go ahead with the running of the course, the main rationale that helped to create a useful and attractive course was to place oneself in the course participants' shoes in order to foresee their main needs and requirements as newcomers to the UK who hoped to access a very specific job market.

A helpful method for the organisation of the course has been to structure it in three parts: 1) greetings and introductions, 2) generic knowledge about the UK job market, and 3) specific knowledge about teaching Spanish in different UK educational contexts, such as early years, primary, secondary, further education, higher education and as a more freelance activity (i.e. au-pairing, private tutoring or organising language clubs, amongst others).

2.1. Greetings and introductions

This part of the course is actually crucial in that it helps the group to take shape and it creates a trusting atmosphere in which it is possible to share personal information and expectations within the group. By hearing about individuals' goals and previous experiences, course participants actually begin to clarify their own aspirations in the process of reinventing themselves (Clark, 2013). Here, 'adaptability' is explored as a key skill to have for the workforce and, through an open forum, participants share their concerns and the obstacles that they have overcome so far in the job search process.

2.2. Generic knowledge about the UK job market

Here, great emphasis is placed on the cultural clashes that may be encountered when Mediterranean, Latin and Anglo-Saxon cultures come into contact, especially in business contexts. Practical examples are provided in order to illustrate the explanations given, often referring to the tutor's and to the participants' past life experiences. In this sense, reference to the cultural values and dimensions that influence workplace communication help to illustrate the

points made in a more objective and successful way (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010).

Content covered at this stage refers to the characteristics of the UK job market; the job skills that UK employers prefer; raising awareness of the so-called hidden job market; and acquiring strategies for improving visibility by exposure to new opportunities, like-minded people and useful networks.

2.3. Specific knowledge about teaching Spanish in different UK educational contexts

In this part of the course, we analyse the idiosyncrasies of teaching at different stages and in different educational environments, considering what works and what does not work when looking for jobs in each sector (Prospects, 2015). We also cover content referring to the legal requirements within the teaching profession, such as the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks or the Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), and also include a section on the accreditation and recognition of foreign degrees. More entrepreneurial aspects of the job search are also explored, such as registering oneself as self-employed, undertaking consultancy work, working for language and teaching agencies or fulfilling tax responsibilities.

Additionally, throughout the course we critically analyse a selection of resources, such as job advertisements, institutional websites, etc. from which essential keywords and attributes are highlighted for their relevance in the job application process.

3. Discussion of outcomes

Since 2011, the course has run on 26 occasions and it has enrolled 335 participants. The feedback received has been very positive, often highlighting the fact that the course exceeded the attendees' expectations. A follow-up course is being designed in order to further the knowledge covered regarding the search process

for Spanish teaching posts in the UK, in which more specific references to Latin American idiosyncrasies will be explored. Likewise, participants' feedback forms have highlighted the usefulness of considering this course as a forum for discussing their personal interests. In this sense, an interesting follow-up is the creation of a blog in order to offer more opportunities for the participants' exchange of information once the course is finished.

4. Conclusion

Graduates often need further support in understanding how generic employability skills suit particular jobs. In this regard, this course has become an important step in the learning of employability skills in order to become Spanish teachers in the UK. In the case study explored here, the course participants have come from Spain and Latin America. Such a course would also be beneficial for other nationality groups with similar professional interests, for example Chinese individuals wanting to become Chinese language teachers in the UK.

References and links

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Published by Research-publishing.net, not-for-profit association
Dublin, Ireland; Voillans, France, info@research-publishing.net

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Employability for languages: a handbook

Edited by Erika Corradini, Kate Borthwick, and Angela Gallagher-Brett

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ISBN13: 978-1-908416-37-7 (Paperback - Print on demand, black and white)

Print on demand technology is a high-quality, innovative and ecological printing method; with which the book is never 'out of stock' or 'out of print'.

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-38-4 (Ebook, PDF, colour)

ISBN13: 978-1-908416-39-1 (Ebook, EPUB, colour)

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data.

A cataloguing record for this book is available from the British Library.

Legal deposit, France: Bibliothèque Nationale de France - Dépôt légal: juin 2016.